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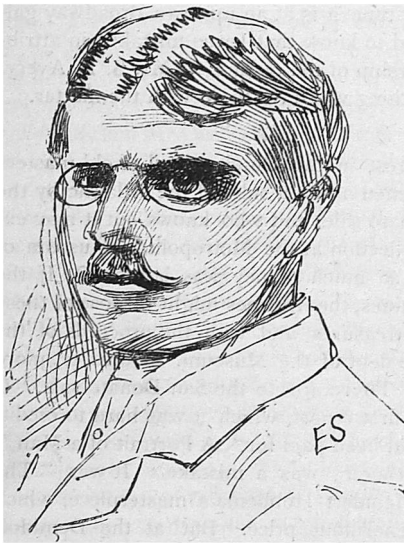
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The Art Gallery

EDWIN A. ABBEY.



E. A. ABBEY. BY EDWARD STRAHAN.

ALTHOUGH entangled and entrammelled all his life in the toils of the illustrator, Mr. Abbey has never been regarded as a mere illustrator by his friends and his public. It is because his slightest work gives evidence of desires and powers beyond the purview of the craft that his efforts have excited such a living interest. Indeed, in the present state of our American pictorial journals—ever more and more anxious to discard and depose the old-fashioned draughtsman by profession, and to attract the services of the oil-painter, the aquarellist, or the sculptor, by the bribe of exquisite engraving as faithful as photography, and careful printing as scrupulous as that accorded to etchings—there is a place for the ardent and sensitive artist. Abbey has never been asked to draw upon the block with that fatal precision and definition enforced upon the ancient draughtsman—a precision “that the engraver cannot misunderstand if he tries.” Blessed with a happier epoch and opportunity, he has been allowed to set down his dreams in their vagueness and their ardor, his conceptions in their pregnant life-assuming moment. Let him but submit a composition stamped with the signet of nature and invention, and his cloudiest tints, his lines of happiest accident, are translated for him with versatile sympathy by the keenest burins in the world.

A desire to keep his design in the early creative state, dear to all artists, has ever distinguished him. The plodding mechanical toil, used by the profession to equalize textures and make neat work, has been rejected by him with more than impatience—he cannot see why it should be undergone. “Nature seems to me a contrast of certain values,” he remarked to us once while sketching in Long Island. “They are very hard to get, and the lucky moment is when I have seized them by a fortunate wash of color. The patching-up and matching of edges and outlines is mere journey-work. No artist looks with any interest at the stippling and stumping; that is mere trick used to please the canaille. Why should I work for the canaille, when artists will understand my intention? Let me get the relative vigors well placed, and let my design show the movement and accent of life, and I have done all that seems to me worth doing.”

Well—an architect is probably most interested in his edifice when the scaffolding is all about it, and the principles of his construction manifested to any professional eye that may chance to be looking on; the public, on the other hand, obstinately demands polished marbles, garnished floors, and mortar and shavings swept away. We have never chanced to see a picture of Mr. Abbey's which had got beyond the “interesting” state. Over each of them, in imagination, we see the crowding heads of a troop of brother-artists, thronged about the figure of the clever executant, with criticisms and praises. “That stroke told well! There is a color that just hits the effect! How that gray wash expresses distance! There is a broken shadow that generalizes the hair to perfection! That scratch over the hand assists the movement! Don't touch it again, or you'll spoil it!” Such are the tributes that clever

artists hear humming in their ears while they are creating. The resulting work is apt to be graphic, expressive, panting with life, a candid impression of nature unspoiled by conventionality. The value of such pictures is already very great, lacking only one thing—the mystery by which nature conceals the way in which its pictorial effects are got—the art-hiding art.

Every one of Mr. Abbey's compositions, we repeat, is in a certain sense an “étude,” and every one is an “illustration.” His “Stage Office,” seen at the last Universal Exposition, and called a “harmony in gray not without charm for all its austerity” (by M. de Lastolot in the “Gazette des Beaux-Arts”), is an “illustration” after all, calculated for a certain sized page, with a degree of breadth adapted to the scale, and with more or less of the uneasy demonstrativeness, the ranging from a blackest black spot to a whitest white spot, necessary in the old illustrating idea. An “illustration,” by the by, as we here mean the term, is a work which imprisons its whole effect in a certain number of inches, made as graphic and telling and various as possible; it is like the “good short story” which your Dickens or your Wilkie Collins writes for the Christmas number of something or other. It is brilliant, but it is a captive; it glitters, but it cannot expand; its essence is to be



ACTING “AS A FATHER.” BY E. A. ABBEY.

always thinking of the nearness of its margins, to be always calculating its verge. It must get all the effect it possibly can in a theme of determined narrowness;



AN EXCURSION IN THE RAIN. BY E. A. ABBEY.

and its triumph is when it can almost hocus the spectator into imagining it something larger.

A crisp Detaille, whether in color, or reproduced for

publication, with every line directed to explain the action, to help tell the story, to pique the spectator's attention to the last elucidation of the incident, is an



AN AUTHOR IN THE LAKE COUNTRY. BY E. A. ABBEY.

illustration. A photograph from Correggio's “Antiope,” from Velasquez's “Spinners,” from Bonington's “Francis I.,” from Henner's “Magdalen,” though all color be lost but the gray, preserves the problem of vigors, of modelling, of quality, and is not an illustration.

Mr. Abbey, starting from the illustration, hardly ever gets beyond the function of the illustration. When he essays an aquarelle, as the “October Rose,” we feel that we are seeing an illustration tinted. But within the “cadre” of his special talent, what brilliancy, crispness, expression, and movement!

The first drawings of his that attracted attention were the sketches from General Cesnola's Cyprus statuary. In these, copying from photographs, there might seem to be little chance for artistic free-hand work. But he contrived to give an interest to the weather-worn textures pitted by time, to the history of many a bruise and fracture, to the weird archaic types; and he drew the whole budget of Cyprus excavations out of the category of archæology and into the free air of artistic and human interest. These drawings were executed for Harper's Magazine. On the cover of Harper's—that woful cover, insulted and outraged with decorative crimes—he redrew the bubble-blowing children, making them presentable, and effacing the discredit of the labor of some previous artist whose identity is not discoverable. This was not so grand an achievement as Michael Angelo preserving the work of the earlier sculptor in “David's” back, but it showed the same kind of humility and tractableness.

Mr. Abbey's designs are always original, fresh, personally invented. No reflection of another artist's work is ever to be detected. In “The Stage Office” he makes an effect with the very emptiness of the room, that constitutes a motif of a vacuum, around which, against the sides of the picture-frame, the personages are plastered, the lady-passenger and the gentleman-passenger attracting or repelling each other at their ease at that distance. In the scene where a young carpenter, in the Philadelphia State-House, detaches the British coat-of-arms from its place over the Speaker's desk, there are studies of breathless continentals, with their hearts in their mouths and their courage in their hands, that Hogarth would have given many a groat for. Another scene of the Revolution, with a patriotic American matron cajoling the boozing British generals, is a Meissonier-like group of breeched and braggadocio military. This picture was in the Exposition Universelle, and was highly praised in “L'Art.” His late illustrations to the ballad of “Whittington” contain one gem, of little Richard, in hood and houppelade, listening to the bow-bells with his apple-cheek resting on his pigmy hand, which is quite too “cunning” for any thing, and should be enlarged for an elaborate framing-print.

His present engagement in England, where he is commissioned to study on the spot the scenes of British poetry—the haunts of Stratford-on-Avon; the stately terraces where Herrick's dames march in rich attire, in "liquefaction" of skirts and pride of drapery; the castle-stairs where St. Agnes's maid descends with her lover—has been a mixed delight to the designer. His notes are not yet firm and assured; he seems to tremble with the weight and the fertile confusion of new ideas. To complicate the matter, his health his given way, and his frame, never robust, has bent to the hurricane of novel impressions and importunate tasks. He is ordered, they say, to Biarritz by his physician. It is to be hoped that this set-back will be but temporary. During



SKETCH. BY ADRIEN MARIE.

a recent fit of illness in London it was touching to note the sympathy and interest accorded to the young, unheralded American lad; the carriages of royal academicians stopped every day, with the most solicitous inquiries from the foremost names of British art; and careful nursing, with delicate attentions on the part of fair compatriots, surrounded his sick-bed with those cares that the angels seldom leave home to administer, and those medicines that cannot be bought from even the most able apothecary.

The inedited designs by Mr. Abbey which we have the good fortune to present belong to his residence in England. One delineates a prominent and popular American author, whose researches in dæmonology have made household familiarities out of a shunned and uncanny subject, as he appeared when taking his ease at a rural inn in the Lake Country. The resemblance is striking, and, for many a reader, will amount to a betrayal. Another depicts the same philosopher, with Boughton the artist and our young adventurer, plodding through London streets in the rain, on the hot scent of some historical curiosity. The other shows the subject of this memoir, who is no giant in stature, meeting a fair young stranger from these shores, to whom he had been requested to act "as a father." The exquisite protecting glance which he directs at his protégée, whom he represents as much taller than himself, will not be lost upon the reader.

Mr. Abbey, like many of the artists who have distinguished themselves in this city, proceeds from the ancient and glorious Academy of Art in Philadelphia. This almost centenary institution, which scatters its alumni over the country at large with small care for claiming the credit of their education, conferred that firm groundwork in the arts of design which, in this brilliant artist's case, has acted on an exceptionally gifted nature to chasten imagination with the restraints of science, and fortify fancy with fact.

EDWARD STRAHAN.

*ANECDOTES OF MEISSONIER.

THIS illustrious French painter is the hero of numerous anecdotes, some of them, we apprehend, more entertaining than authentic. Here are two of the latest: Meissonier decidedly refuses to be patronized. It is related that a rich Englishman came to him one day and offered him \$1000 if he would paint his portrait and agree to finish it in a fortnight. "If you fail," he added, "I shall deduct \$5 a day until you have delivered it." This angered the artist, who declared he wouldn't paint the portrait for \$10,000. "You are not a fit subject," he said, "for any pencil. Allow me to bid you good-morning." "I dare say, now, that you are joking," responded the Briton. "But I won't insist on the deduction if you'll agree not to detain me very

long." "Detain you?" echoed the artist. "I won't detain you another second. There is the door. Go!" "What—what's the matter?" inquired John Bull. "What is all this row about?" "It means that you have mistaken your man. You think me exclusively an animal painter. I paint horses and dogs, but curs never."



ADRIEN MARIE. BY EMILE BAYARD.

On one occasion a German banker from Hanover, having brought a letter of introduction, asked Meissonier to do half a dozen panels in his house for five hundred marks apiece, explaining that he would defray his travelling expenses there and back, and give him his board gratis. The Frenchman ironically said that he would not dream of asking such a price, that if he should



ADRIEN MARIE. CARICATURE BY HIMSELF.

accept the money he would insist on painting also the walls, the hearth, and the cupboards. "Oh, very well; suit yourself. You can earn your money as you choose. You can do the hearths and cupboards after you have got through with the panels." "You are a beast!" roared the irate Gaul, and flew out of the room, leaving the astonished stranger alone. No wonder he was en-



SKETCH. BY ADRIEN MARIE.

raged. He is in the habit of being approached with great delicacy and of being flattered by men in exalted positions.

Notwithstanding Meissonier spends so much time on his pictures, he has painted more than can be conveniently enumerated, and his works steadily increase in value. Those that have been bought and sold again have generally advanced in figures, and advanced

roundly. Three or four that went first for \$3000 to \$4000 have changed hands since at \$10,000 to \$15,000. The artist himself thinks and says that his death will be a great benefit to holders of his canvases; that the latter will jump up the moment it is known that he has passed away. He is persuaded that in another century he will be rated financially with the Dutch and Flemish masters of the seventeenth century. It would be hazardous to contradict him.

ADRIEN MARIE.

HARDLY any French painter of to-day has won in a short time such popularity as a delineator of the simple phases of home life as has the subject of our sketch. M. Adrien Marie is not yet thirty-two years old, but he already bids fair to become for France what Millais is for England—the painter of babies, "par excellence." He has not always, however, made babyhood his theme. At one time he inclined to the weird and dramatic, as shown in his "The Accursed" and his "Cavaliers of Death." But his sombre moods do not show him in his best vein. At the Salon in 1876, he exhibited his "Hymn to the Creator"—a charming figure of Eve. But, as we have said, it is as the painter of babies that he excels. M. Marie in August, 1878, became the father of a bouncing boy, and since that he has painted hardly anything else but babies. Master Emile-Louis—whose figure appears in these pages in many postures—has been invaluable as a model to his papa who has filled many note-books with sketches of the young gentleman in almost every conceivable attitude. "The Little Miser," Marie's picture in the Salon of 1879, represented an aristocratic-looking infant fastened in his baby-chair, yelling highly because a bigger boy sitting near him will not give him the orange he holds in his hand. The little miser has already four oranges, and has grabbed them so greedily that one of them has fallen upon the floor. The engraving of the picture has been reproduced in more than one of the New York illustrated journals, and doubtless is familiar to many of our readers. Of the color, we cannot speak, not having seen the original; but the drawing and the composition of the picture certainly are admirable. The ease of the attitude of the bigger boy as he lounges in his chair and looks at the baby tantalizingly is especially noticeable.

In addition to several illustrations in the present article, which have been reproduced from "La Vie Moderne," we are enabled, through the courtesy of Professor Camille Piton, of Philadelphia, to publish for the first time some original drawings by M. Marie. From the portrait of the latter, by his friend and teacher, M. Emile Bayard of "L'Illustration," it will be seen that he is a handsome man, very different from



SKETCH. BY ADRIEN MARIE.

what one would suppose him to be by the amusing caricature he has furnished of himself on the same page. He is of medium height, and has a fair complexion, almost like a girl's. As may be judged from his fondness for children, and from his agreeable features (as they are represented by his friend, we might add), he is naturally of a lively and genial disposition. His playfulness when a student in the atelier of his master came near, on one occasion, compromising Pils, that well-known battle-painter. Cabanel, Gérôme, and Pils, the life professors at the École des Beaux Arts, had adjoining studios. One day Pils discovered to his horror that young Marie had drawn a huge caricature on his walls of Gérôme's "Cleopatra before Cæsar." The professors do not